

Introduction

The Multiple Dimensions of Biblical Church Leadership

IMAGINE that you went to see a 3D movie but never got the special glasses they hand out in the lobby. You would be able to figure out basically what was going on in the film, but you would not be seeing it the way it was meant to be seen, and your eyes would probably begin hurting before long.

That is more or less what is happening with leadership in the church today. We have plenty of leaders, and new ones are being appointed all the time. But something doesn't look right, and sometimes it is downright painful to watch.

Why? The church used to be a leadership factory that developed leaders not only for the church but also for the world, and it also served as a distribution center that deployed those leaders throughout the world. But no longer – today it's the other way around. Most churches try to make leaders out of people who have been identified as successful in the world. But in most cases they are worldly leaders that have been influenced by a secular humanist worldview. In other words, today's church typically takes the leaders developed by the world and attempts to deploy them in the church, while thinking that a six-week leadership training class will undo what they have learned from the world and magically transform them into effective, faithful leaders for Christ.

One of the reasons for the current crisis is a distortion created when we focus too much on only one or two aspects of Christian leadership revealed in the Scriptures or ignore some

of them completely. I want to show you from the Bible how the church can once again become a leadership factory and leadership distribution center for the world, by taking full advantage of all *three important dimensions* that God has provided and delineated for us in His Word. I call it ‘3D Leadership,’ and it is a proven plan not only revealed in God’s Word but also illustrated in the history of the church.

Why do I call it *3D Leadership*? Because Christian leaders are multiplied and mobilized when the church takes the time to *define* leadership, then *develop* leaders, and then *deploy* leaders.

If the church recovers this biblical leadership/discipleship effort, we know what will happen, because it happened in the first-century church! In Acts 17:6 there are thirteen words uttered by a frustrated pagan adversary of the Gospel and the kingdom of God as believers arrived in Europe. How I would love to hear those words once again – ‘These people who have turned the world upside down have come here also.’

You and I both know *who* turned the world upside from Jerusalem to Europe in less than twenty-five years after the ascension of Christ – the Spirit of God through the people of God who comprised the church of God. We also know *what* turned the world upside down – the power of the Gospel. But the book of Acts also tells us *how* they turned the world upside down. The church embraced the initiatives of Gospel evangelism and discipleship; Gospel church planting and revitalization; Gospel deeds of love and mercy; and Gospel leaders defined, developed and deployed. These four Gospel initiatives were employed in every city as recorded in the book of Acts resulting in the Gospel expanding ‘in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’ This book will bring focus and clarity as to how we implement the fourth initiative of leaders being defined, developed and deployed not only in the church, but from the church into the world.

If I were to begin my pastoral ministry again tomorrow knowing what I know today, I would commit myself thoroughly to this 3D process of raising up Godly leaders: First, I would intentionally focus on *defining* with greater clarity the biblical concept of a

Christian leader. Secondly, I would invest more time and energy in *developing* leaders who are committed to that biblical concept of Christian leadership through life-to-life discipleship. And thirdly, I would make sure we are *deploying* them not only in the church and their families, but into every honorable sphere of influence throughout our culture.

Whenever God decided to do something special, He called, equipped and empowered grace-driven leaders, who in turn multiplied themselves through other leaders.

If I could start my ministry all over again, I would certainly seek to be more consistent in intercessory prayer and more effective as an expositional preacher of the Word. And in fact, I cannot think of a single area of ministry where I would not desire to grow in faithfulness and competency. But the one thing that I would elevate on my priority list more than any other is 3D Leadership: defining, developing, and deploying Christian leaders who are capable of transforming society through a Spirit-filled, Christ-centered and Gospel-driven lifestyle, and who would intentionally multiply themselves by raising up the next generation of similar leaders.

One reason I would elevate leadership multiplication and mobilization is because this was a major priority and practice for our Lord Jesus in His three-year public ministry. Furthermore, the great movements of history in general and the movements of God's kingdom in particular have always been driven by the multiplication and mobilization of Godly, effective leaders. The Bible and other history books are filled with examples of this dynamic. Whenever God decided to do something special, He called, equipped, and empowered grace-driven leaders, who in turn multiplied themselves through other leaders.

We are living at a time when there is a tremendous opportunity for expanding the Gospel and the kingdom of God throughout the nations of this world. One contributing factor that has created this opportunity is a vacuum of good leadership and a simultaneous phenomenon of cynicism about today's leadership, created by the disappointing character of our present leaders and the failed

concepts of secular leadership that have allowed them to gain and abuse power.

So let us return to the mandate, the mission, and the model of Christian leadership and intentional leadership multiplication found in the Scriptures. If our Lord grants us success, then the church will again become a leadership factory and distribution center. Join me in the following pages as we learn how our God can do this, through us, to extend His glorious kingdom, redeem lost men and women, and transform the cultural landscape of our world. And by God's grace and for His glory we may hear one more time, "These people who have turned the world upside down have come here also."